

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-06 IO-10 ISO-00 CCO-00 CIAE-00

OTPE-00 FCC-01 INR-05 NSAE-00 OCE-00 RSC-01 COME-00

BIB-01 TRSE-00 XMB-02 PA-01 PRS-01 USIA-06 SAM-01

SAB-01 EA-06 /062 W

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R 121420Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7685

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

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DEPT PLS PASS ALL OTHER ARAB CAPITALS, NOUAKCHOTT,
MOGADISCIO, BONN, LONDON, PARIS AND ROME IF DESIRED.

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETEL, TSPA, BTIO, OCON, TS

SUBJ: ARAB TELECOMMUNICATIONS UNION CONGRESS IN TUNIS

REF: TUNIS 7122, BEIRUT A-204 (BOTH NOTAL)

SUMMARY: CONGRESS OF ARAB TELECOMMUNICATIONS UNION
ESTABLISHED TECHNICAL COMMITTEE TO SUBMIT REPORT AND
RECOMMENDATION RE ARAB SATELLITE COMMUNICATION
SYSTEM BY MARCH 1975. ARAB MINISTERS OF COMMUNICA-
TION TO MAKE FINAL DECISION BY NEXT SUMMER AS TO WHETHER
PROCEED WITH CREATION OF ARAB EQUIVALENT OF INTELSAT
TO IMPLEMENT SATELLITE COMMUNICATION SYSTEM. US AND
OTHER FIRMS LOBBIED HARD DURING CONGRESS TO CONVINCE
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DELEGATES OF SUPERIORITY OF GOODS AND SERVICES THEY

WERE OFFERING FOR SATELLITE, ALTHOUGH ACTUAL SALES CONTRACTS REPORTEDLY TO BE AWARDED ON OPEN BID BASIS. CONGRESS ALSO TOOK OTHER MEASURES TO ADVANCE ARAB EFFORTS ASSURE GREATER COOPERATION ON COMMUNICATION MATTERS. END SUMMARY.

1. ELEVENTH CONGRESS OF 18-MEMBER ARAB TELECOMMUNICATIONS UNION (ATU) WHICH BEGAN NOV 21 ENDED DEC 7 WITH LUNCH HOSTED BY PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA PRECEDED BY MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA. ACCORDING TO BRAHMIN KHOUADJA, DIRECTOR OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS IN THE TUNISIAN MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS AND PRESIDENT OF THE CONGRESS, THIS CONGRESS, LIKE ITS PREDECESSORS, WAS CONCERNED PRIMARILY WITH EXCHANGES OF TECHNICAL INFORMATION AND CONSIDERATION OF MEANS OF IMPROVING COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ARAB STATES, PARTICULARLY TO FURTHER CULTURAL/POLITICAL COOPERATION. HE SAID THAT CONTRARY TO "EXCESSIVE" PRESS SPECULATION REGARDING ESTABLISHMENT OF ARAB COMMUNICATION SATELLITE, MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENT OF CONGRESS WAS AGREEMENT BETWEEN ARAB STATES REGARDING REDUCTION IN TELEPHONE, TELEGRAPH, AND TELEX RATES BETWEEN ARAB COUNTRIES. OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS INCLUDED AGREEMENT ON ARABIZATION OF COMMUNICATION RULES, TRANSLATION OF TECHNICAL TERMS, PROJECT TO PUBLISH SPECIAL QUARTERLY REVIEW, MEANS TO IMPROVE INTER-ARAB STATES SERVICE, AND ASSISTANCE TO ARAB COUNTRIES IN TRAINING COMMUNICATIONS CADRES AND PROVISION OF TECHNICAL ADVISORS. CONGRESS ELECTED EGYPTIAN MINISTER OF TRANSPORT RIADH TO ADDITIONAL YEAR'S TERM AS SEC GEN OF ATU.

2. RE ARAB COMMUNICATION SATELLITE, KHOUADJA NOTED THAT CONGRESS AGREED TO FORM 7-8 MAN TECHNICAL COMMITTEE WHICH IS TO PREPARE DETAILED STUDY OF ALL ASPECTS OF PROJECT, INCLUDING ESTABLISHMENT OF A PROPOSED COMMERCIAL ARAB AGENCY SIMILAR TO INTELSAT TO IMPLEMENT PROJECT. THIS COMMITTEE, WHICH WILL BE CENTERED IN CAIRO, IS TO SUBMIT ITS STUDY TO ALL ARAB STATES BY MARCH 1975. ARAB MINISTERS OF COMMUNICATION TO MEET AGAIN NO LATER THAN NEXT JUNE IN ORDER MAKE FINAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DECISION AND TAKE NEXT STEPS IF DECISION IS "GO."

3. KHOUADJA DESCRIPTION OF PRESENT THINKING ON ARAB COMMUNICATION SATELLITE WAS GENERALLY IN LINE ENCLOSURE TO BEIRUT'S A-204 OF NOV 12. CONGRESS DID DECIDE, HE SAID, THAT, RATHER THAN LIMIT SPONSORSHIP OF PROJECT TO A FEW ARAB STATES WITH NEEDED FINANCIAL RESOURCES, ALL TWENTY-ONE ARAB LEAGUE MEMBERS SHOULD

BE INCLUDED IN "ARAB INTELSAT" IN ORDER FOR ARAB SATELLITE PROJECT TO ACHIEVE PRIMARY OBJECTIVE OF FURTHERING ARAB UNITY THROUGH BETTER COMMUNICATION ON CULTURAL AND POLITICAL MATTERS. HE RECOGNIZED THAT THIS WOULD REQUIRE THAT SOME OF RICHER ARAB COUNTRIES CARRY INITIAL FINANCIAL BURDEN OF ESTABLISHING SATELLITE SYSTEM FOR MANY OF POORER ARAB STATES. COST OF ACTUAL OPERATION ONCE SYSTEM ESTABLISHED WOULD PROBABLY BE PRO-RATED AMONG MEMBER COUNTRIES ON BASIS OF ACTUAL UTILIZATION. HE SAID THAT DEPENDING UPON LENGTH OF TIME REQUIRED TO ARRIVE AT DECISION TO PROCEED, TO ESTABLISH "ARAB INTELSAT", AND TO RESOLVE TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL PROBLEMS, REGIONAL SATELLITE MIGHT GO INTO INITIAL AND LIMITED OPERATION IN 1977-78.

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED ANY ABOVE ADDRESSEES.

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INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-06 IO-10 ISO-00 CCO-00 CIAE-00

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E.O. 11652: N/A

4. MANY AMERICAN, CANADIAN, EUROPEAN, AND JAPANESE FIRMS WERE IN TUNIS DURING CONGRESS TRYING TO CONVINCE PARTICIPANTS OF ADVANTAGES OF USING THEIR COMPANIES' PROPOSALS FOR ARAB SATELLITE. CONSIDERABLY MORE COMPANIES INTERESTED THAN THOSE CITED IN BEIRUT'S A-204. KHOUADJA INSISTED THAT ALTHOUGH MANY COMPANIES HAVE BEEN ACTIVELY PURSUING THIS PROJECT FOR SOME YEARS (NOTABLY HUGHES), NO DEFINITE DECISIONS HAVE BEEN MADE AS TO FOREIGN SUPPLIERS OF GOODS AND SERVICES FOR SATELLITE PROPOSAL. ONCE ATU DECIDES ON COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES TO BE SERVED BY SATELLITE, "ARAB INTELSAT" WILL PROCEED TO IMPLEMENT PROJECT BY CALLING FOR INTER-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NATIONAL BIDS, THUS GIVING ALL FOREIGN COMPANIES OPPORTUNITY TO COMPETE.

5. SATELLITE PROPOSAL SUBMITTED BY ENGLISH GEC-MARCONI CO. IN COOPERATION WITH US PHILCO-FORD OBTAINED BY EMBASSY AND BEING POUCHED TO NEA/AFN AS EXAMPLE OF TYPE OF SUBMITTALS RECEIVED BY ATU. WHILE MOST COMPANIES ACTIVELY LOBBIED WITH DELEGATES DURING CONFERENCE, ARRIVAL OF CANADIAN MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS PELLETIER DURING CONGRESS GAVE IMPRESSION THAT GOC MAKING SPECIAL EFFORT TO SUPPORT CONSORTIUM OF EIGHT CANADIAN COMPANIES SEEKING TO INTEREST ARABS IN ITS PROPOSAL. IN FACT, HIS VISIT HAD BEEN PLANNED FOR SOME TIME, BUT FORTUITOUS COINCIDENCE WITH CONGRESS PERMITTED PELLETIER TO DISCUSS PROJECT WITH VARIOUS OFFICIALS. KHOUADJA NOTED THAT CANADIAN PROPOSAL ATTRACTIVE BECAUSE CANADIAN REGIONAL SATELLITE "ANEK" WAS ONE OF FIRST REGIONAL SATELLITES LAUNCHED AND APPEARED IN MANY WAYS TO MEET ARAB REQUIREMENTS AND BECAUSE CANADA HAS EXCELLENT TELECOMMUNICATION SYSTEM.

6. KHOUADJA NOTED THAT DECISION AS TO WHICH COLOR TELEVISION SYSTEM TO USE (SECAM, PAL, OR OTHER VARIANT) STILL PREMATURE AND WOULD BE MADE AT FUTURE DATE. HE AND OTHER ARAB DELEGATES BELIEVED PROBLEM OF SELECTION RELATIVELY MINOR SINCE COMPATIBILITY BETWEEN SYSTEMS CAN BE ASSURED BY APPROPRIATE CONVERSION EQUIPMENT BY GROUND STATIONS OR STUDIOS. KHOUADJA NOTED THAT TUNISIA, LIKE MOROCCO, OCCASIONALLY BROADCASTS FRENCH SECAM COLOR TELEVISION, BUT HE SAID THAT INVESTMENT TO DATE MODERATE AND VERY FEW COLOR RECEIVERS IN COUNTRY. THEREFORE, TUNISIA STILL NOT COMMITTED TO ANY SPECIFIC COLOR TELEVISION SYSTEM.

7. KHOUADJA SAID THAT CONGRESS PARTICIPANTS FULLY AWARE
OF NEED TO COORDINATE ANY ARAB SATELLITE COMMUNICATIONS
PROPOSAL WITH INTELSAT AS WELL AS WITH ITU. HE SAID
THAT UNTIL DECISIONS REACHED REGARDING TYPE OF SATELLITE
PROGRAM DESIRED AND ITS OBJECTIVES, HOWEVER, IT WOULD BE
PREMATURE TO ENGAGE IN SUCH CONVERSATIONS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TELECOMMUNICATION, LABOR UNIONS, MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 DEC 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: garlanwa
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974TUNIS07645
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740361-0193
From: TUNIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741239/aaaabgxg.tel
Line Count: 239
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EB
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 74 TUNIS 7122, 74 BEIRUT A-204
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: garlanwa
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15 APR 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <23-Aug-2002 by garlanwa>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ARAB TELECOMMUNICATIONS UNION CONGRESS IN TUNIS
TAGS: ETEL, TSPA, BTIO, OCON, TS
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005